

Seattle Economic Development Commission

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 27, 2015, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Location: Boards and Commissions Room, Seattle City Hall
600 4th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104

Commissioners Present: Chair: Chris DeVore. Shaiza Damji, David Freiboth, Christine Hanna, Rob Mohn, Alan Nay, Julie Pham. Commissioner representatives: George Allen (Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce), Randy Hodgins (University of Washington).

Mayor's Staff Present: Brian Surratt, Office of Policy and Innovation

Office of Economic Development Staff Present: Theresa Barreras, Steve Johnson, Rebecca Lovell, Michael McVicker, Karin Zaugg-Black, and EDC Consultant Claudia Bach

Invited Guests: From the Seattle Department of Transportation: Director Scott Kubly. From The U District Partnership: Elizabeth McCoury, Theresa Doherty, Don Schulze. From the Seattle Department of Planning and Development: David LaClergue.

Meeting was called to order at 1:05pm.

Welcome and Meeting Overview – Chris DeVore, EDC Chair

- Welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their on-going commitment to the Commission.
- Acknowledged the opportunity to talk with Seattle Department of Transportation Director Scott Kubly and learn about transportation issues more in depth so the Commissioners could take the information back to their constituencies.
- Provided an overview of the agenda highlighting the discussion around a possible EDC endorsement of actions in the University District.

2015 Work Group Plans –

A representative from each work group was asked to report to the Commission about their key milestone or priority for 2015 and how the full Commission might support the work. Work Group 3, focused on maximizing the University District as the region's next innovation hub, was asked to go last to present a more in depth report.

Work Group 5 – Manufacturing and maritime workforce needs. Update from Christine Hanna:

- Work group identified a workforce related need across various types of businesses in manufacturing and maritime industries—young people do not recognize the job opportunities in these sectors.
- Group will produce tours of manufacturing and maritime businesses for “rising freshmen,” those going from middle school to high school. Goal is to connect those students to opportunities as they proceed with their education.

- Hired Dave Gering from the Manufacturing Industrial Council to organize, produce, and manage the tours.
- Group will likely make a future ask of the full Commission for help in promoting and/or sponsoring future tours, internships, and employment opportunities.

[Chris DeVore asked all people in the room to introduce themselves briefly.]

Work Group 4 – Telling Seattle’s economic story. Update from Julie Pham:

- Work group decided to focus on creating a toolkit to aggregate information from Seattle’s “storytellers”—e.g. recruiters, tourism bureaus, Chambers of Commerce.
- Group developed key words that describe Seattle, tell its story, and demonstrates its values.
- Group plans to hire a consultant to research and present recommendations on information architectures to advance the platform/toolkit.
- Group will want storytellers from Commissioners’ organizations to participate.

Work Group 2 – Reforms for urban growth planning. Update from Shaiza Damji:

- Work group plans to bring the EDC and Mayor’s Office recommendations on how to improve Seattle’s urban planning strategy. Will generate recommendations from an evaluation of the Mt. Baker neighborhood’s planning process, noting Mt. Baker is an area with a transit hub where there is a discrepancy between the anticipated growth and current reality.
- Hired BERK Consulting to conduct the evaluation and the full report is due in early March.
- George Allen provided an update on the design review and permitting process evaluation work being done by the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce.
 - Worked with NAIOP and BERK Consulting to focus on design review changes.
 - Copies of report presented to DPD and Mayor’s Office. Expect a broader and deeper dive to the EDC on the recommendations. EDC could request BERK and/or DPD to give a future presentation on specifics.

Work Group 1 – Local student financing, “The Seattle Grant.” Update from Randy Hodgins:

- President Obama’s recent community college financing proposal raised the awareness of the importance of having a higher level of education.
- The EDC, through OED, is contracting with the W. E. Upjohn Institute to fine-tune some financing options for “The Seattle Grant,” the EDC’s college financing proposal under development.
- At the April 2015 meeting, the work group’s goal is to present a more refined proposal with several alternatives for the EDC to consider.
- By the end of 2015, group aims to have a fully, fleshed-out proposal with which to move forward.

Supporting the U-District Innovation Hub –

Work Group 3: Theresa Barreras and Rebecca Lovell, OED & The U District Partnership

Rebecca Lovell and Theresa Barreras introduced members of The U District Partnership (UPD) and David LaClergue, from DPD, who have been working with the EDC’s U-District work group.

Theresa explained that the UDP and EDC work group had aligned missions and created an informal partnership to move the collective work forward. There are two priorities the groups are focused on:

- Business Improvement Area (BIA) expansion. [*Note: A BIA is a funding mechanism for business district revitalization and management where a district establishes an assessment on businesses and/or properties within defined boundaries to provide services for the mutual benefit of the ratepayers*].
- A favorable rezone of the U District to promote innovation

Elizabeth McCoury, the CEO of UDP, explained the current BIA program and how it has been operating in the U District. The BIA assesses commercial and residential condominium property owners to generate revenue in order to pay for:

- Cleaning and beautification services
- Business recruitment and marketing
- Urban design planning
- Real estate development

Elizabeth stated there is an opportunity for the EDC to voice its support for the BIA expansion on or before February 25th when Council is anticipated to vote on the legislation.

Don Schulze, a member of the UDP and a property owner in the BIA, stated his support for the expanded BIA.

Chris DeVore voiced his support and noted this presented an opportunity to position the U District as an exciting neighborhood and showpiece for what can be done in other areas of the city through community engagement. He noted the U District can speak for itself but the EDC, in representing the interests of the city at large, has an opportunity to voice support collectively, suggesting a letter of support to City Council.

There was an in-depth discussion on the proposal to send a letter of support for BIA expansion to City Council. Some of the highlights from that discussion include:

- In order to approve a BIA, at least 60% of possible ratepayers must sign on. The UDP reported that 67% have signed on and the threshold was satisfied.
- It was stated that the University of Washington (UW) improved its relationship over the years with the neighborhood and appreciated the need for an improved, livable U District after recognizing a change in its employees' preferences and needs.
- With possible changes coming to City Council due to elections this year, the UDP hopes to get the expansion legislation signed in the first half of this year.

There was a motion (and a second) to issue a letter on behalf of the EDC to the City Council in support of the BIA expansion in the U District. It was recognized that the EDC does not have bylaws and thus, no formal voting process in place. Additionally, it was recognized that only seven Commissioners were in attendance (not including representatives). Recognition of a general consensus to send a letter of support sparked a discussion about how best to proceed. By the end of the discussion, the Commissioners and their representatives felt comfortable with the following procedure:

- Additional information on the BIA would be sent to all Commissioners.
- A letter would be drafted by OED staff on behalf of the EDC with individual signature blocks for those Commissioners who affirmatively sign on to the letter.
- The draft letter would be distributed via e-mail and Commissioners would indicate their preference in being added to the signature block (i.e. in support of the BIA expansion).
- The final letter would be sent by the EDC Chair to City Council by February 24th.

On a separate topic, David LaClergue from DPD provided an outline of the steps it will take to finalize a rezone in the U District. He mentioned that as DPD develops its recommendations, he could provide a more in-depth briefing to the EDC at a later date. The steps involved in changing the zoning, and where EDC influence could be valuable, include:

- Before Council can adopt a rezone, changes need to happen on the Comprehensive Plan. Separate legislation for that piece is moving forward this spring (May/June). A support letter to Councilmember O'Brien by mid-March would be ideal to help lay the foundation for zoning changes.
- Later in Spring 2015, DPD will issue draft recommendations for public comment. The EDC could make comments and help steer draft legislation.
- Sometime after July/August 2015, DPD will send formal recommendations to Council. The legislation could be finalized any time from August 2015 to early 2016.

Any formal support for the above steps was tabled and will be discussed at a later date.

Dialogue with Scott Kubly, Director of Seattle Department of Transportation

Steve Johnson introduced SDOT Director Scott Kubly. Director Scott Kubly gave a presentation titled "Moving Seattle Forward" [presentation slides can be found [here](#)].

In addition to the presentation, Scott answered questions from the EDC and there was discussion primarily related to: the viaduct replacement project, the renewal of the Bridging the Gap levy, the seawall project, how multiple transportation plans are implemented and funded, and SDOT's aim to be more community and district focused in future planning efforts.

Scott indicated he would welcome the opportunity to give a future briefing on the Bridging the Gap renewal and discuss how the EDC may be able to help.

Annual Report – Claudia Bach, AdvisArts, EDC Consultant

An annual report is to be produced in April and include the EDC Economic Indicators. The goal is to have a draft to Commissioners by early April and a final draft by the next EDC meeting.

Because the meeting ran long, Claudia indicated she and OED would seek Commissioners' input, via e-mail, about how Commissioners might use this report and who the audiences might be.

Adjourned - Chair Chris DeVore adjourned the meeting at 3:05pm.